



Cooperative State
Research,
Education, and
Extension Service



SPRING 2003
VOL. 21, NO. 1

AITC *Notes*

Agriculture Successful Medium with Special Need Students

"Agriculture is a wonderful concept to use for educating blind/visually impaired students."

- Rilyn Colucy, Minnesota State Academy for the Blind



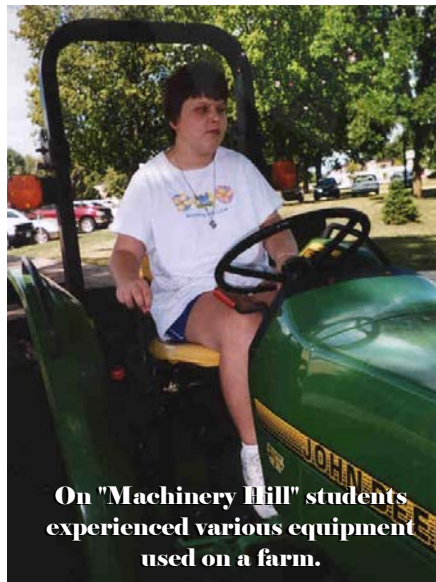
Learning to "squeeze" while milking the cow was one of the new experiences on "Dairy Store Day".

When Rilyn Colucy, curriculum coordinator at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB), met Susan Anderson, education specialist for the University of Minnesota and Minnesota Ag in the Classroom (M-AITC), neither realized what a successful program they were creating.

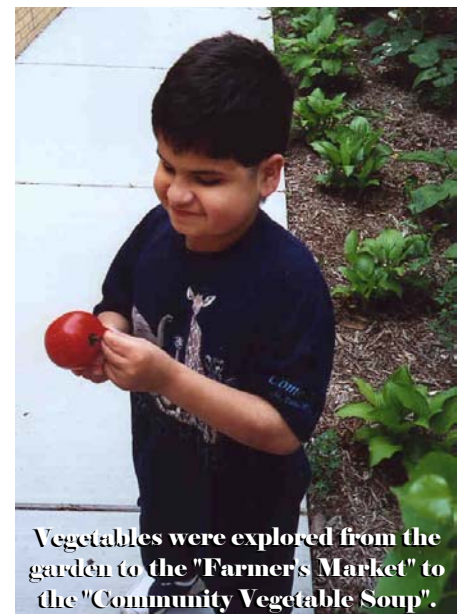
Rilyn contacted Susan to set up an agriculture based in-service for the faculty at her school. The learning curve for both Rilyn and Susan increased immediately. Rilyn was amazed at all the wonderful agricultural resources that were available for educators, and Susan was interested to learn how materials and resources could be modified for blind/visually

impaired students. After extensive detailed preparation with M-AITC director Al Withers, Rilyn, Susan, and the MSAB staff, summer school curriculum with agriculture as the theme was put into place. With special planning in order to provide the best learning atmosphere, the students experienced visits to farms, the county fair, simulated milking using a sawhorse and a rubber glove, developing ag commercials for a local radio station, germination activities, gardening, and nutrition education among other things. The popular Minnesota AgMag, maps, and many other resources were converted to Braille. The basic skills vital to a summer school program were integrated into the vast array of agricultural activities that the students experienced.

The MSAB educators reported that the students were very engaged in learning about the food and fiber system, with



On "Machinery Hill" students experienced various equipment used on a farm.



Vegetables were explored from the garden to the "Farmer's Market" to the "Community Vegetable Soup".

the added and unexpected benefit of less discipline concerns because of the high interest level of the students. Some of the staff at MSAB have continued to use agriculture as their science theme for the entire 2002-2003 school year.

"Agricultural literacy provides versatile, hands-on lessons that involve the senses and can easily be adapted for all learners, a perfect match for the students at the MSAB," concluded Rylan.

Going to Nashville? Watch for Al & Susan's workshop where they will share information on this project and more activities with special need students.

Spring Brings Special Recognition to Agriculture

Excellence in Science, Technology and Math Education Week

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is partnering with public and private organizations to develop activities for **Excellence in Science, Technology and Math Education (ESTME) Week**. ESTME Week is intended to launch a nationwide initiative that will excite K-12 students about the wealth of opportunities for discovery and exploration afforded through math and science education.



A summary of activities and materials is included on the ESTME website at <http://www.ostp.gov/html/ESTME.html> to help parents, teachers, scientists and community organizations excite students about the world of agriculture - a science-based industry that encourages the advancement of science, technology, and mathematics with the theme of **Math, Science and Technology: Educating for the Future in Agriculture**.

Excellence in Science, Technology and Math Education Week March 16-22, 2003



National Ag Day March 21, 2003

National Ag Day & Week

National Agriculture Day will celebrate 30 years on March 21, 2003 as millions across America gather to celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture on this first day of spring.

Each American farmer feeds more than 120 people—a dramatic increase from 25 people in the 1960s. Quite simply, American agriculture is doing more—and doing it better. As the world population soars, there is an even greater demand for the food and fiber produced in the United States.

It is important to understand the new technologies available for producing food and fiber products that benefit both the producer and consumer with safe, abundant, and affordable products.

National Agriculture Week encourages people to focus on a dynamic, high-tech industry and consider career opportunities in agriculture. Visit www.agday.org for more information.

Get involved! Your participation is critical in spreading agriculture's story

Agriculture Display

Choose a high-traffic area for the display to reach as many classroom visitors as possible.

You may want to include agricultural products from your locality, region, or state -- ask grocery stores, farmers and ranchers, agri-businesses and others in your area to donate items. Find out what practices these individuals use to produce food, fiber, and commercial products and how those practices have changed because of increased mechanization, technology changes, and consumer demands. Perhaps some of them can be incorporated in your display. Photos and illustrations of methods may also be included.

Agriculture resources your library carries should be made available, too. Include journals, news articles, videos, and books in the display. Old and new magazines and other literature could be used to highlight agricultural advances. Check your archives for points of interest regarding agriculture in the history of your area.

Art or Writing Contest

Organize a poster/photography contest or a poetry/creative writing contest about agriculture and the environment. Award prizes for the best entries to encourage participation. Post entries for others to see.

Speech Contest

Have students write and deliver a speech on the important role of agriculture in daily life. Award prizes for the best entries to encourage participation. Post entries for others to see.

Field Trips

Take a classroom field trip to a local farm or to a university's agricultural research farm. Or, bring the farm to the classroom. This provides a great opportunity for children to learn about career opportunities in agriculture.

Petting Zoo

Organize a petting zoo where children and their parents can see farm and ranch animals and learn more about them. Ask local farmer and ranchers to provide the animals.

Speakers

Invite local county extension agents, farmers, scientists, health professionals, teachers, professors, or others involved in agriculture to speak to your class about their role and career in the agricultural industry.

Food Drive

Work with a local food bank to collect canned and nonperishables for a worthy cause demonstrating how agriculture meets the needs of everyday life by providing food and fiber.

Pizza Party

Organize a pizza party and explain how ingredients from kids' favorite food comes from farms and ranches and how each is processed and delivered to the grocery store or restaurant.

Contact your Local Ag Resources

State Ag in the Classroom coordinators, agricultural organizations, extension offices, and departments of agriculture are ready to help with ideas and resources.



Agriculture is Science

Agriculture today has gone high-tech. It had to because keeping U.S. agriculture productive requires research that is every bit as complex as the space program. As a matter of fact, many agricultural research scientists work with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on a regular basis. They use satellites to examine fields for crop damage, map soil conditions, and look for changes in the environment that could affect farming—or be caused by farming.

Agricultural scientists may be engineers, microbiologists, chemists, veterinarians, plant pathologists, nutritionists, or many other specialties. What they all have in common is that they are working out how to grow crops, raise livestock, produce renewable raw materials for industry, and help preserve our environment.

Show Off Agriculture at the Science Fair!

You don't have to live on a farm or even have a garden to use agriculture as a topic for an agricultural science project. You just have to be interested in what goes into growing plants and animals or how this affects the world around you. Agriculture doesn't have its own category in science fairs, but it is a part of many of the "official" categories.

- **CHEMISTRY:** *How do different conditions affect the speed at which fruit and vegetables ripen?*
- **BOTANY:** *How do different treatments change how fast seeds sprout?*
- **ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE:** *How does soil pH affect the pH of water that touches the soil?*
- **MEDICINE & HEALTH:** *Do different varieties of the same fruit have the same level of vitamin C?*
- **MICROBIOLOGY:** *What happens to the way plants grow if there are no microorganisms in the soil?*

The Agricultural Research Service at USDA has put together a few basic ideas of agricultural science projects you can do at <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/kids/fair/story.htm>. Use these ideas for coming up with your own project and show off agriculture at your school!

Contacts Corner

Growing on Limited Resources

Looking for an efficient and effective way to expand your programs without the cost of research and development? Don't overlook the obvious— build your resources with existing programs.

This can offer several benefits:

- Building partnerships with others who share your goals
- Maximizing development funds while saving staff time
- Promoting your program through existing marketing efforts
- Exposure to new potential partners and sponsors
- Credibility and identification with well-known programs
- Offer opportunity to personalize for your needs

USDA and partner projects highlighted in this newsletter are perfect examples where organizations are encouraged to use the quality materials that have been developed.

Caution should be taken to ensure that the purpose and resources that are considered for use match the goals of your organization. Also be certain to contact the author for permission to use or alter any materials.

State Contacts to Meet in Nashville

The AITC Consortium Annual Meeting will be held at 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 2003, at the AITC National Conference in Nashville.

This will be followed by the USDA AITC State Contacts Meeting at 9:30 a.m., which is an open meeting for all conference participants.

Contact Charles Curtis for further information at 931-388-7872 or email ccurtis@tbf.com.

AITC Excellence Grants Program

The USDA's AITC Program and the National AITC Consortium are proud to announce the new AITC Excellence Grants Program for the development of innovative agriculture education projects.

Applications must be received by April 4, 2003. Award amounts are up to \$5,000 for a single award and up to \$10,000 for a joint project.

For full details and application forms, please visit www.agclassroom.org and link to the AITC consortium page, or contact Tad Duncan, State Contact, Texas on: 254-751-3608 or email: tduncan@txfb.org.

From the President

Greetings from the host state of this year's AITC National Conference, "Cows, Crops and Country Music" June 24-28 at the Sheraton Music City in Nashville, TN. I invite you all to come to the conference, participate in the exceptional program, and enjoy our Tennessee hospitality.

The National AITC Consortium Board continues its work to develop a multi-year strategic plan for USDA and AITC consortium organizational plans and programs. This plan will be discussed at the State Contacts Business Meeting June 24th in Nashville.

Have a new project idea to develop but no funding? I encourage you to apply for an AITC Excellence Grant. We are looking to fund many projects this year.

See you soon for the kickoff of the National Conference!

Charles Curtis, President



Register Today!

2003 Ag in the Classroom National Conference June 24-28, 2003 Nashville, Tennessee

The agenda is filled with tours, workshops, exhibits and events to give you new resources for an exciting year in agriculture! Come for the fun, take home the resources, and enjoy the country hospitality!

Visit www.agclassroom.org for details and to register online, or contact Charles Curtis, Conference Chairman, at 931-388-7872, ccurtis@tbf.com.

Upcoming 2003 Events

Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources & Related Sciences Annual Conference & Career Fair

March 27-29, Atlanta, Georgia

"MANRRS-Pursuing Excellence in Leadership, Scholarship and Service" is the theme for this year's event. Visit www.manrrs.org for full information.

National Science Teachers Association National Convention

March 27-30, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Visit www.nsta.org/conventions for information. NSTA is also accepting proposals until April 15, 2003 for the 2004 Convention. See "Presenting at Conventions" on their web site.

National 4-H Conference

March 29-April 5, Chevy Chase, Maryland

The National 4-H Center will host the National 4-H Conference "Leading the Way: The Next Century of 4-H". Details are at www.4-H.org/2003conf/.

Student Writing and Critical Thinking Conference

April 3-5, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

The Conference targets educators interested in teaching writing and critical thinking across all disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences. Visit <http://uwadmnWeb.uwyo.edu/AqWrite/index.htm>, or contact Jim Wangberg, Associate Dean, at 307-766-4135, email wangberg@uwyo.edu.

USDA Cooperative State Research, Education & Extension Service Administrative Officers Meeting

April 13-17, New Mexico

Hosted by New Mexico State University, the meeting provides state participants with the opportunity to share information with their peers in budget, finance, grants management, and human resources management. Go to www.reeusda.gov for more information.

Earth Day

April 22, Nationwide

Take this opportunity to promote how farmers care for the environment. Visit www.earthday.net to list your activities or find project ideas.

National Education Association 2003 Expo

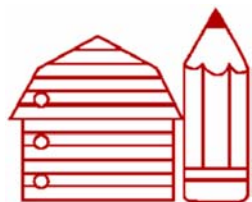
July 1-3, New Orleans, Louisiana

Delegates representing 2.7 million members and exhibitors will gather for the 141st Annual Meeting. Visit www.neaexpo.com for details.

30th Annual Conference and Exhibit of the National Middle School Association

November 6-8, Atlanta, Georgia

For further information, visit the national middle school association website at www.nmsa.org.



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Ag in the Classroom Notes is published quarterly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Washington, DC. *Ag in the Classroom* is administered through the Higher Education Programs within the Science and Education Resources Development Division of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). Newsletter subscriptions are available to the public at no charge. To subscribe, cancel a subscription, or change an address (include mailing label), contact the *Ag in the Classroom Program* at the address on the left.

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